Strength through Collaboration
John Richard Raymond, Sr., M.D.
Inaugural Address

Thank you Mr. Zore, and thanks to your Colleagues on the Board of Trustees for your faith in me. I am honored to have been chosen to serve as the sixth President of the Medical College of Wisconsin, which is one of the finest institutions of medical education in the United States of America. I acknowledge the warm welcome that I have received officially today from Mayor Didier of Wauwatosa, Milwaukee County Executive Walker, Commissioner Baker, Dr. Prescott, Dr. Bergin, Dr. Raff, President Fredrick, Director Beller, President Troy, President Petasnick, Dean Ravdin and the Medical College’s President Emeritus Michael Bolger. I would like to express my gratitude to those who have been instrumental in my life and career, especially my parents John and Patricia; my siblings Patrick, Joelle, and Joseph; my children John and Krisanna; and my good friend and mentor President Ray Greenberg of the Medical University of South Carolina.

President Greenberg’s comments about collaboration eloquently set the stage for the theme of my talk today, which is “Strength through Collaboration”.

The history of the Medical College consistently demonstrates the importance of collaboration to our great institution. It began in 1893 with the founding of the Wisconsin College of Physicians and Surgeons, and several years later with the founding of the Milwaukee Medical College; the latter of which was absorbed into Marquette University as the Department of Medicine in 1907.

In 1908, Abraham Flexner was commissioned by the Council on Medical Education of the American Medical Association and the Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching to assess medical education in the United States and Canada. Flexner proceeded to visit one hundred and fifty five medical schools over an eighteen-month period of time, following which he published a report in 1910 that was highly critical of medical schools in this country.

Among many recommendations, Flexner emphasized the importance of association of medical schools with comprehensive universities in which the scientific method could thrive, and which could provide the resources to sustain excellence in education. As a result of that study, the Wisconsin College of Physicians and Surgeons was purchased by Marquette University and merged with the Marquette Department of Medicine/Milwaukee College of Medicine in 1913 to form a new entity called the Marquette University School of Medicine. For the subsequent sixty-four years, this collaboration generated superb medical care for Milwaukee, and resulted in the education and training of thousands of physicians who practiced in every state of the union. Graduates of the Marquette University to this day, continue to serve as practitioners and leaders of medicine.

During the years of stewardship of Marquette University, the medical school began fruitful collaborations with the County of Milwaukee and the Milwaukee Veterans Administration
Medical Center, which continue to this day. In late 1967, Marquette University terminated its sponsorship of the medical school due to ongoing financial concerns. The Medical School was reorganized as a freestanding, private medical school called the Marquette Medical College. This new entity virtually was without financial resources, did not own a hospital, nor did it have substantial revenues from its physician practices. The college did have a dedicated faculty and many community physicians who volunteered their time and talents to teach at the college, as well as visionary leaders in the community. However, the college was in jeopardy of going bankrupt and closing its doors forever.

The medical school did not close its doors, thanks to the development of a public-private collaboration that both saved the medical school and resulted in the creation of the Milwaukee Regional Medical Center campus here in beautiful Wauwatosa. Thanks to the efforts of County Executive John Doyne, Northwestern Mutual chairman Edmund Fitzgerald, and community leaders such as Joseph Heil and Rudy Shoeneker, among many others; the Greater Milwaukee Committee rallied to raise over one million dollars in a few short months to insure the solvency of the medical school. The medical school was renamed the Medical College of Wisconsin in 1970 to reflect its ties to the entire state of Wisconsin. Over the last forty years, under the leadership of five Presidents, the college has had remarkable success and growth on this beautiful campus. We now have over 1,400 faculty, 1,200 students and nearly five thousand employees, with an annual budget approaching one billion dollars. 14,700 MCW graduates practice, conduct research or teach in every state in our nation. One third of practicing physicians in Wisconsin have trained here at the Medical College.

Our successes to date are attributable in large part to our collaborations with remarkable partners here on the Milwaukee Regional Medical Center Campus. This campus has a combined economic impact of three billion dollars, thanks to the strength of the Medical College, Froedtert Hospital, the Children’s Hospital of Wisconsin, the Milwaukee County Behavioral Health Division, The Curative Network, and the Blood Center of Wisconsin. Those successes point the way to our future, which will generate strength through collaboration. Collectively, those institutions have achieved more through collaboration than the sum of their individual efforts.

Collaboration is essential now more than ever due to the enormous challenges and opportunities before us. The challenges are daunting. These include the uncertainties of health care reform; a weak economy; little net population growth in Wisconsin; consolidation of the health care market; and constrained funding for health care and biomedical research.

Many of our challenges are financial in nature. Although we must run the college like the business that it is, we cannot lose sight of our core missions to teach, to generate new knowledge, and to serve society. It was Flexner who one-hundred years ago referred to physicians as “social instruments”. He also reminded us of the higher purposes of medical schools by stating that, “…the medical profession is an organ differentiated by society for its highest purposes, not a business to be exploited”.

I am confident that we can meet the challenges facing us quite effectively. My confidence is based on meetings with literally hundreds of faculty, staff, students and friends of the College. I have been impressed and gratified by the remarkable level of support that we receive from our friends and collaborators; and by the dedication and talents of our students, staff and faculty. We are so very fortunate to have beautiful facilities, great people and strong partners that share our values and high aspirations.

In order to move successfully into the future, we will need to focus on selective, targeted growth. We will focus on developing our people, programs, and partnerships. Because of the stature of the Medical College and the strengths of the Milwaukee region, we can recruit and retain the best and brightest people to our institution. In addition, we should nurture the careers and talents of our faculty, staff and students who already have made a commitment to MCW.

We will work to expand career development opportunities for faculty and staff, and to strive to relieve our faculty of administrative burdens. We should acknowledge and celebrate the talents of our faculty and staff, and the inspiring commitment to MCW by individuals such as Stavri Joseph, who has served the College for sixty years, and Dr. Tom P. Aufderheide, a faculty member who was recently elected to the Institute of Medicine of the National Academy of Sciences.

We must develop innovative and contemporary programs in education, research and service. Indeed, our faculty and staff are working diligently on an innovative new medical school curriculum; on expanding our research scope, infrastructure and support mechanisms to enhance the environment for research and discovery; and on reaching out to partners in our community that can help us to better address the needs of Milwaukee, Wisconsin and the region.

Collaborations with diverse individuals and institutions will help us to build the strength to cope with the complexities of the healthcare terrain. As a free-standing medical and graduate school, we need access to quantitative scientists such as engineers, computer scientists, mathematicians, physicists and informatics experts; to attorneys, business experts, and entrepreneurs; to social scientists, epidemiologists, and leaders in humanities disciplines; and to community-based providers and community leaders. It is essential that we reach out to partners such as Marquette University, UW-Milwaukee, the Milwaukee School of Engineering, Federally Qualified Health Centers, UW-Madison, and health systems and health care providers across the state. In that regard, the recent award of a twenty million dollar Clinical and Translational Science Award grant from the National Institutes of Health to a consortium of Milwaukee institutions lead by the Medical College validates our collaborative vision and provides some of the infrastructure necessary to create meaningful across the board collaborations throughout the region.

Through collaborations, we will maximize our own chances of success to educate outstanding clinicians and scientists; to be good partners and collaborators; to be responsible citizens that serve the communities in which we live; and to address the pressing health care needs of those
in our region who suffer from health disparities, hopelessness, and the cycle of poverty. We can most effectively fulfill our obligations to society by embracing a diverse workforce in the broadest manner possible; by creating a welcoming and supportive environment; and by opening the doors of opportunity to those who have the potential and desire to contribute to our society regardless of ethnicity, gender identity, sexual orientation, gender, creed or socioeconomic background. In that manner, we will gain strength through collaboration with people from many diverse backgrounds.

I would like to close this address by expressing optimism for the future, confidence in our people, and gratitude for the wonderful opportunity to serve this outstanding institution. I thank you.